DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 353 024 JC 930 056

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TITLE Education for the 21st Century: Infusing Cultural Diversity into Policy and Practice.
PUB DATE 5 Jun 92
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual National Conference of the Community College General Education Association (11th, Hauppause, NY, June 5, 1992).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Role; Community Colleges; *Cultural Awareness; Cultural Differences; *Cultural Education; Educational Change; *Educational Policy; Educational Trends; Faculty Integration; *Minority Groups; *Racial Bias; *Role of Education; Two Year Colleges; Two Year College Students

ABSTRACT

Community college education can be seen as a racist institution to the extent that it does not ensure access to services, access to learning and, ultimately, the completion of a degree program for students of color. Racism and intolerance for diversity restrict democracy in American society. Faculty and administrators at community colleges, however, have a critical role in ushering diversity into democracy. Among students of higher education, community colleges enroll 55% of Latino students, 54% of Native American students, and 43% of African American students. However, many of these students do not persist to graduation. Two-year college educators and administrators have a special opportunity and a special responsibility for the education of students of color. Diversity is not about the numbers of diverse groups represented; rather, it is about creating an environment in which each individual, without regard to ethnicity, gender, physical ability, or age can learn up to his or her full potential. The focus of diversity intervention is to move institutions from a mono-cultural and Eurocentric perspective towards a multi-cultural and pluralistic one. In a given institution, the first step in diversity intervention is to analyze policies and organizational objectives to determine the extent to which diversity is reflected as a value. Educational institutions must develop a clear policy statement on diversity; they should require that students complete courses examining non-European cultural groups and provide diverse faculty and administrative role models. Instructors should utilize multicultural teams of students to examine multicultural issues in the classroom. Finally, administrators should provide more in-service training for instructional staff regarding issues of diversity. (PAA)

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For

11th National Conference of the Community College General Education Association, Hauppause, NY, June 5, 1992

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"Education for the 21st Century: Infusing Cultural Diversity into Policy and Practice"

Michael D. Woodard, Ph.D.

I'm especially pleased to be here today. My first teaching job was at Central YMCA Community College in Chicago. They took a chance on me when I had not considered teaching. And because they took a chance on me I was able to go on in higher education. So I owe a special debt to community college education.

Today, I want to share some of my thoughts on diversity. Diversity is a hotly debated issue in education. In the very broadest of terms, I wish to discuss strategies to fuse diversity to the community college environment, and I want to challenge faulty and administrators to take the lead in advocating for diversity.

I must say a word about the *Los Angeles Institute for MultiCultural Training*. I enjoy very much my appointment at UCLA, but I have passion for the diversity interventions I do with private and public organizations. The *Institute* is a educational and training service and I founded it because it seemed to me that management of corporations, educational institutions, and community based institutions were ill prepared to deal with workforce diversity. Our motto is, "Committed to the dignity of all human beings while recognizing the value of the fundamental differences that lie between people of different cultures." We start with the premise that differences in language, religion, dress style, family patterns, gender roles, dietary habits, all that make up the culture, adds richness to life. Cultural differences add something to life. And we find that environments where these differences are recognized and valued, are environments where problems get solved and where learning takes place. So at the *Institute,* we work with corporations and non-profit organizations; we recently developed an in-service training module for educational institutions. We seek to create positive environments where differences are viewed as positive not negative.

I had planned to give one kind of talk that might be described as a "light after lunch talk" but as Dean Randolph Manning indicated, the civil unrest that began in Los Angeles spread throughout other parts of the country and indeed into Canada demand that I give another talk.
You see the civil unrest that we witnessed is a protest. It was a protest against the institutionalized racism that African-Americans, Latino-Americans, and that other ethic groups of color have experienced over time. In particular, the civil unrest was a protest against the blatant mistreat that African-Americans have

received most recently in the judiciary. Lets not be confused, African-Americans and other ethnic groups of color experience racism every day and in every American institution, education notwithstanding. To the extent that education, community college education, does not ensure access to services, access to learning, and ultimately the completion of a degree program is the extent that community education operates as a racist institution for students of color.

And during the civil unrest I found myself reflecting upon the basic principles upon which this country was founded. Democracy, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness and justice. I found myself thinking about these sacred principles that undergird our society. I also found myself reflecting upon what Gunnar Myrdal in the 1940's referred to as the American dilemma; that is the gap between the ideals of this society and the practices of this society. Ethnic groups of color do not enjoy the same sense of democracy, do not enjoy the same liberty, and do not enjoy the same justice and do not enjoy a similar opportunity for happiness as do European ethic groups. In other words, racism and intolerance to diversity operate to restrict democracy in our society. It operates to restrict access to education. The recent civil unrest that we witnessed was a wake up call. It was an alarm that we need to pay attention to democracy, particularly in education.

All is not lost and all is not bad. At times Americans have worked with a determined spirit to broaden the base of democracy in our country and outside of our country, but at times our consciousness needs to be aroused in order that we recognize that the American dilemma is ever present in our society. And it seems to me that you as faculty members and administrators in community college education have an especially critical role. You have an especially critical responsibility to usher diversity into democracy as we move toward the 21st century. Simply take your lead from President Truman. Oh, he had a radical idea in the 1940's. He had the idea that education was the right of all people and it was under Truman's leadership that the community college movement was born and for the first time in history common people were entitled to education as well as the elite. As one writer recently put it egalitarism existed in the education (El-Khawas, 1988). Today there are more than twelve hundred community colleges dedicated to the mission of providing higher education to all of the people (El-Khawas, 1988).

I want to share with you some statistics about who is attending community colleges. In 1985, 51% of all first time freshman entered community colleges not senior colleges. Students of color represent 21% of your entire student population. Community college is the education of choice of students of color. That is to say

that 55% of Latino students attend community college; 54% of all Native American students attend community college; and approximately 43% of African-American students attend community college. Community college is the educational place of choice of students of color. So community college faculty and administrators have a special opportunity and a special responsibility for the education of students of color.

The down side, so to speak, of enrollment trends is that African-American and Latino-American students tend not to graduate in rates computable to their attendance at community college. They tend to drop-in and drop-out, drop-in and drop-out. It is true that community colleges are an integral part of the educational system, especially the educational system for students of color. The graduation rate and the attrition rate raises a question, however, about whether it is true that all students are being educated. It is true that opportunities exist for higher education, but is it true that those opportunities exist for all segments of our society? It seems that what began as a movement to break down barriers to education, community college education, has not always been on guard to the resurrection of those very same barriers to education.

I have to admit, I have an agenda. My agenda today is to enlist you to be an advocate for diversity. To take things as they are - enrollment rates, attrition rates, graduation rates as they are - and move forward in improving graduation rates in particular. Educators, administrators, I want you to identify subtle barriers that preclude graduation for students of color and eradicate those barriers. Only then, that community college can make good that it promise of education for all. Be diversity advocates and one way top start is to examine the way in which that diversity is reflected throughout your institution. In other words, as we move toward the 21st century, we must transform the needs of students and potential students; the needs of those students who don't graduate must be transformed into goals for modern educational reform.

Diversity

Now, I want to clarify what I mean by diversity. One might believe that diversity exists in a student body, for example, when the representation of various ethnic groups is somewhat proportioned to their distribution of the population. If there are 50% women in the population, then 50% of student population, and so forth. In regard to diversity in a faculty, I've frequently heard it said *that if there is one faculty member of color then there is diversity in the faculty.*

At the *Institute,* we operate under a different conception of diversity. By diversity we refer to creating an environment where each individual, without regard to ethnicity, gender, physical ability status, or age can work up to or learn up to his\her full potential. Diversity is not about numbers. At the very best, numbers are just the starting point for diversity. Diversity is about an environment of inclusion. Diversity refers to creating an environment where differences are valued for the perspectives that they bring to bear on a particular topic or solution to a problem. I wonder about the extent to which diversity exists within your respective institution?

The focus of diversity intervention is to move institutions from being mono-cultural and Eurocentric in perspective towards being multi-cultural and pluralistic in perspective. It is in multicultural inclusive environment that we find that retention rates go up, graduation rates go up. There is a commitment among students to persevere; there is a commitment to persist, not to drop-in and drop-out. There is a determination not only to obtain a degree but to persist until the skills that go along with the degree are obtained. Diversity advocates are needed to move community colleges from being mono-cultural to being multicultural institutions.

The Holistic Approach to Diversity Intervention or Toward an Inclusive Educational Environment

Recommended here is a holistic approach to diversity intervention. The first step in a holistic approach is to complete an analysis of policies and organizational structures to determine the extent to which diversity is reflected as a value. The policy and organizational structure analysis is a major undertaking that informs the implementation of the remainder of the diversity initiative.

I challenge you to think about your institution as I discuss the issue of policy and curriculum. Educational institutions that will serve as models for the 21st century will have a clear policy statement on diversity. The president is most important is this regard. It is the president's responsibility to develop policy statement. The president of the institution is the most important factor in determining whether diversity is taken seriously on that campus. The policy statement should make clear that he\she is committed to the implementation of the policy. The president's annual report to the trustees should demonstrate how the diversity initiative will be put into action. Certainly all advertisement and publicity of the institution should reflect its' position on diversity. And certainly the president, who is an advocate for diversity will monitor, his\her conversation for any sign of bias or prejudice.

Educational institutions that will serve as models for the 21st century to do a complete assessment of the curriculum and the assumptions that underlie it. Students are dropping out of community college. Students of color are dropping out of community college. Many students of color do not successfully pursue higher education, not because they lack intellectual ability, not because of a lack of character but because the traditional curriculum requires that they be cut off from their roots, from their culture. Traditional curriculum requires that they deny the value of the culture from which they come; the very same culture that sustained them up to enrollment in community college (Clover-Glock, 1990). Let me put it differently. Not only Chaucer, not only Shakespeare, not only Edgar Allen Poe, not only Tennyson; but give me James Baldwin; give me Richard Wright and Maya Angelou; give me Sandra Cisneros and Frank Chin, all of whom have made an important contribution to American culture but tend to be excluded from traditional curriculum.

The issue is not that there are too few students of color on our campuses, the issue is that there is too little color in our curriculum (Clover-Glock 1990). This not only handicaps students of color but it also handicaps majoritive students also. It hurts majoritive students because they are not given the opportunity to learn about others who are not like themselves but who have made important contributions to this society. Thus, majoritive students are handicapped as they leave the educational environment and move into the multi-cultured and a multicolored world of work and they have difficulty adapting.

I challenge the community colleges to develop ICCR's - InterCultural Course Requirements. There are many requirements for graduation. But in addition to or instead of some existing requirement, many colleges and universities now require students take two courses that deal with non-European cultural groups. I am not suggesting that courses on European cultural groups be thrown out completely. I'm saying add on two InterCultural Course Requirements and delete other requirements that may be redundant. Students must live and work in a multi-cultured world. To the extent that they are educated in a mono-cultural environment is the extent to which they are handicapped.

I challenge you as educators to be creative in your instruction. Consider developing classroom assignments that deal with multicultural issues. Such issues can be found every day in the newspaper. And in assigning students to multicultural or any topic, assign the students in ethnically diverse teams so they can have the experience working with and problem solving with people who are different than themselves.

Faculty might consider bringing students into their home for special meetings. Special class meetings, such as the last meeting of a course, to discuss the course can be a tremendous learning experience for both faculty and students.

I challenge community college administration to provide more in-service training for instructional staff and faculty regarding cultural diversity. In-service training should be ongoing. In-service training should be available to you on an ongoing basis.

I challenge community colleges to provide diverse faculty and administrative role models. Students need to have role models in key decision making positions to help them though the process. Nothing begets academic success like having a model of someone who has been through the process.

Diversity advocates are needed to move community college education forward. Do what you as one faculty member, as one administrator, can do. Encourage discussions on diversity in your faculty meetings, in your staff meetings. Examine your own position on diversity, your own concerns and your own anxieties. As we move towards the 21st century there can be no excuses. There can be no excuses. Model educational programs will have diversity as its centerpiece. Lack of administrative support, lack of financial support or ignorance on the part of faculty or administrators can no longer serve as excuses for not incorporating diversity issues into the program. Diversity is about inclusion not exclusion. Demanding inclusion in our schools in no longer a courtesy but a necessity. As educators, a mono-cultural perspective is not an ethical choice, differences must be acknowledged and encouraged. In the words of Dr. Jeannetta Cole, President, Spellman College:

> "we are for difference, for a acknowledging difference,
> for allowing difference, for respecting difference,
> till difference doesn't matter anymore.

Thank you.

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